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Friday, 30 October 1998, 3 p.m.

New York

Chairman: Mr. Mernier . . . . . (Belgium)

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. González (Chile), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Statement by Romania

The Acting Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): Before the Committee continues the second stage of its work I call on the representative of Romania, Mr. Alexandru Niculescu, who has asked to make a statement.

Mr. Niculescu (Romania): Thank you, Sir, for allowing me to make a few comments and then a statement within this context.

First, I wish to refer to agenda item 73 (d), regarding the report of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR). My first comment is that Romania attaches great importance to UNIDIR activities. The last report of the Institute underlines very clearly that the work carried out by that body aims at facilitating discussions and negotiations by the international community on the issues of disarmament and international security. The studies, carried out with dedication by a small number of researchers, cover a large number of items of the disarmament agenda, especially the new one, thus providing us with a better understanding of the new challenges ahead of us. At the same time, this offers the possibility of setting a global overview and of passing beyond our national, and sometimes restrictive, perceptions.

That is why Romania believes that the international community should continue to support the activities of UNIDIR, including through adequate material assistance. It is in the interests of all of us that UNIDIR should function properly. In this regard, we welcome the efforts made by various Governments and encourage them and other countries to continue this pattern.

Now I come to a special statement. I would like to use this opportunity to clarify an issue which for too many years has clouded the situation of a distinguished United Nations civil servant, Mr. Liviu Bota, a Romanian-born citizen who is now the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Georgia. As many members may recall, in 1986, in flagrant violation of the privileges and immunities of United Nations personnel Mr. Liviu Bota, at that time Director of UNIDIR, was prevented from returning to his post in Geneva by an abusive and entirely politically motivated decision taken by the Ceaucescu dictatorial team. Moreover, in the debates of this very Committee at the forty-first session of the General Assembly, the former Permanent Representative to the United Nations of the communist regime made a number of unjustified accusations concerning Mr. Bota.

I want now officially to state that these allegations are null and void. By doing so we want not only to acknowledge the outstanding contribution of Mr. Liviu Bota in the service of the United Nations but also to affirm the determination of the new democratic Romania fully to respect the principles and rules governing the status of the United Nations international civil service.

I ask that this statement be fully reflected in the records of the Committee.

98-86266 (E)

This record contains the original texts of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

Agenda items 63 to 80 (*continued*)

Thematic discussion on item subjects; introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all items

Mr. DuPreez (South Africa): My delegation has asked to speak to address items under cluster 4, "Conventional weapons".

The South African Government's national position on the issue of small arms and light weapons has been stated in several forums on various occasions. This position has recently been formalized in South Africa's response in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 52/38 J, in which Member States were requested to submit views on the Secretary-General's report on small arms, on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained therein and, in particular, to provide views concerning the convening of an international conference on the illicit trade of small arms in all its aspects.

The South African policy position has been circulated as document A/53/169/Add.3. As I stated during the general debate, at this session of the First Committee the South African delegation will continue to support draft resolutions dealing with conventional arms, small arms and light weapons. The devastation wrought by the proliferation of these weapons on socio-economic development generally, and specifically in the reconstruction of post-conflict societies, can no longer be ignored.

The challenge in addressing the proliferation of light weapons and small arms is to marshal the necessary human and financial resources, encourage the sharing of reliable data among national departments and regional partners, coordinate action and raise the profile of the issues to gain the support of Governments, politicians and non-governmental organizations. Furthermore, the illicit proliferation of small arms is closely linked to other criminal activities and therefore must be addressed within the context of initiatives aimed at reducing crime.

In order to avoid unnecessary duplication and the waste of valuable resources, it would be important to coordinate national, regional and international initiatives, focusing on the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. In this we see the United Nations playing the central role. South Africa believes that a holistic approach is necessary to address this problem. Concurrent action must be taken at national, regional and international levels, focusing on both illicit and licit transfers of small arms and light weapons. To reinforce national action it is imperative that a regional approach addressing the concerns of individual regions and adopting an incremental approach be formulated to address the problem of the uncontrolled proliferation of these weapons. This will ensure that as each region of the world develops an indigenous approach, building blocks will be put in place to effectively deal with this issue globally.

A cooperative partnership should be established between Governments, international and regional organizations and the non-governmental community to mobilize public and political support. The role of the non-governmental community in assisting Governments in achieving the support and aiding in the compilation of reliable data regarding the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in all its aspects should be explored fully.

The South African delegation has for these reasons initiated a new draft resolution, A/C.1/53/L.41/Rev.1, entitled "Illicit traffic in small arms". It is a pleasure for me to introduce the draft resolution, which has so far been sponsored by Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Botswana, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Denmark, Ecuador, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guinea, Hungary, Ireland, Jamaica, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mali, Mexico, Monaco, Mozambique, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Peru, the Philippines, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Senegal, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Sweden, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Uruguay.

The aim of the draft resolution is to strengthen the Secretary-General's efforts to provide Member States, through broad-based consultations, with a global picture of the magnitude and scope of the phenomenon of illicit trafficking in small arms. The Secretary-General's consultations should also focus on possible measures to combat illicit trafficking in and circulation of small arms, including those suited to indigenous regional approaches, and provide an assessment of the role of the United Nations in collecting, collating, sharing and disseminating information on illicit trafficking in small arms. An example of such a role could be the establishment of a database on illicit trafficking in small arms.

The result of these broad-based consultations with Member States, interested regional and subregional organizations, international agencies and experts in the

field, together with the reports by the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms and the study group on ammunition and explosives, will provide the necessary authoritative information to enable the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly to make a decision on the objectives and scope of an international small arms conference and to decide what more should be done to address this problem.

The draft resolution also invites Member States in a position to do so to provide the necessary assistance, bilaterally, regionally and through multilateral channels such as the United Nations, in support of the implementation of measures associated with combating illicit trafficking in and circulation of small arms.

I wish to point out a technical error in the eleventh preambular paragraph of A/C.1/53/L.41/Rev.1. The beginning of the paragraph should read,

> "*Underlining* the importance of increased cooperation and coordination both among the relevant intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations ...".

The rest of the paragraph continues as is. The Secretariat has assured us that this correction will be reflected in a corrigendum which will be published on Monday.

It is the belief of my delegation and the delegations of other sponsors that this draft resolution can be adopted without a vote.

South Africa's position with regard to the convening of an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects, as reiterated during the Committee's general debate, is that such a conference should be held after 1999 to enable Governments and regional organizations to share their experiences and facilitate dialogue. The aim of the conference should be to increase cooperation and to avoid duplication of initiatives to ensure that scarce resources are utilized effectively. The conference should formulate an action plan to combat this proliferation problem based upon the experiences of indigenous regional approaches in this regard. Such regional approaches will have put in place measures which would allow us effectively to deal with this issue globally.

Given the magnitude of the problem of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in all its aspects and the urgent need to address this problem, South Africa, as a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.13/Rev.1, entitled "Small arms", supports the convening of an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects, not later than 2001. However, in order for such an international conference to achieve practical results, preparations at the national, regional and international levels would be imperative, taking into account the views of Member States, regional and subregional organizations, international agencies and experts in the field. It is therefore my Government's firm belief that the preparatory process for this conference should commence only after a decision taken at the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly based on the views of Member States on the objective, scope, agenda, dates and venue, and taking into account the 1997 report of the Secretary-General on small arms, as well as the recommendations made by the Group of Governmental Experts established under the terms of General Assembly resolution 52/38 J, to be submitted to the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

While welcoming the offer made by the Government of Switzerland to host the conference, we do not consider this offer to exclude or prejudge the consideration of any other such offers, particularly from those parts of the world in which the illicit trade in and proliferation of small arms and light weapons are most prevalent.

The scale of the landmine problem in Africa and the challenge it poses on a continent with limited resources and great development needs is of equal concern to my Government. The entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, as well as the fulfilment and implementation of all the objectives of the treaty, have been and will continue to be a priority for South Africa. It is for this reason that South Africa has given its full support to the offer made by Mozambique to host the first conference of States parties. By holding this meeting in one of the countries that has been most afflicted by the scourge of anti-personnel landmines, the meeting will serve as a further reminder to all members of the international community of how these weapons are devastating the lives of innocent civilians around the world.

Given its strong support for the treaty, as well as for the convening of the conference in Maputo during May 1999, South Africa and 39 other African Member States have already co-sponsored draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.33, entitled "Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction". South Africa will work closely and actively with Mozambique and other members

of the treaty to encourage those States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify it so that they too can join us in Maputo as full members of the international norm against the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines and on their destruction.

South Africa is also a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.20, entitled "Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects" — the so-called CCW. As a State party to that Convention, and in particular to amended Protocol II and Protocol IV of the Convention, my Government remains committed to the earliest possible implementation of these Protocols. The entry into force of Protocol IV earlier this year and the forthcoming entry into force of amended Protocol II on 3 December 1998, are welcome steps towards prohibiting the use of weapons which cause excessively injurious or indiscriminate effects. However, we continue to call on all high contracting parties to the Convention which have not yet done so, as well as States not parties to the Convention, to take all measures possible to become parties to the Convention and its Protocols.

South Africa, as in similar cases in the past, will also support draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.7, entitled "Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them", as proposed by Mali. We trust that the draft resolution on this subject will once again be adopted without a vote.

Mr. Monteiro (Portugal): The unlawful and uncontrolled use of small arms is a problem that affects almost every country. At the global level we know that far more people are killed by the use of small arms than by tanks or bombs. Small arms are weapons increasingly used as a primary instrument of violence in armed conflicts and in criminal activities, and account for the greatest percentage of deaths, particularly among non-combatants.

There are also legal and legitimate weapons used by States for legitimate purposes, yet their excessive accumulation, dissemination and availability exacerbate and even trigger violence and destabilize societies. Their control and destruction has become a central issue in conflict resolution, peace-building and disarmament.

The task ahead of us is demanding. The control of small arms and light weapons goes beyond the traditional instruments of disarmament and arms control. It is much more complex. In fact, arms control is only one dimension of the problem. Therefore, a comprehensive, integrated and phased approach is needed. Concurrent actions must be taken at national, regional and international levels. A number of welcome diplomatic initiatives to control the excessive accumulation and uncontrolled use of small arms have now been launched, particularly at the regional level.

In this context, I would like to stress the innovative nature of the European Union code of conduct, which sets high standards for arms exports and also provides for a consultation mechanism. Further measures on small arms are now being considered by the European Union in the framework of its common policy. We must of course pursue complementarity and avoid duplication. In this context, we welcome the decision of the Secretary-General to establish the mechanism to coordinate all action on small arms within the United Nations system — Coordinating Action on Small Arms (CASA). A strong role for the United Nations on the small arms issue is in the interests of us all.

It is now necessary to identify a common and unifying objective and to agree on an agenda. We welcome the decision to convene an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects, not later than 2001, as well as the offer of the Government of Switzerland to host it. We consider that the aim of such a conference should be precisely to broaden the common international understanding of the concrete actions required to address this problem. Further discussion will certainly be needed concerning the objectives, scope, agenda, date and venue of the international conference. We should secure broad international support and a clear understanding of the focus of the exercise. While the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms is not the preparatory committee of the international conference, we do believe that careful consideration should be given to its work and recommendations.

In concluding, I would like to reiterate my delegation's total support for draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.13, prepared under the leadership of Japan, and draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.41/Rev.1, "Small arms", prepared under the leadership of South Africa and just introduced by the representative of South Africa. We co-sponsored these two draft resolutions and we hope they will gain consensus in the Committee.

Mr. Khairat (Egypt): I have pleasure in introducing today, under agenda item 71 (e), the draft resolution submitted by Jordan, Myanmar, the Niger, Nigeria, the

Sudan, Swaziland and my own delegation, Egypt, entitled "Transparency in armaments", document A/C.1/53/L.39.

Egypt has always been a supporter of transparency in armaments and considers that transparency in all fields of armaments represents a positive step and a solid confidence-building measure leading to a safer and more stable world. To arrive at this objective, Egypt participated in all panels of governmental experts set up following the adoption of the founding resolution 46/36 L, chaired the very first and pioneering ad hoc committee on transparency in armaments at the Conference on Disarmament and also coordinated the work of the Group of 21 on this issue.

Egypt considers that transparency must apply to conventional weapons as well as to weapons of mass destruction. It must also apply to military holdings and procurement through national production. However, as Egypt and the rest of the non-aligned States have been stressing every year, the concept of transparency should not be limited only to conventional weapons but should also include weapons of mass destruction — nuclear, chemical and biological — as well as transfers of high technology with military applications.

Egypt entered into consultations with other parties in order to reflect these principles in the provisions of the text of the draft resolution. Before that we showed our good faith by reporting in 1993 our exports and imports of 1992 amid promises that the expansion of the Register would be possible following an agreement in the first group of governmental experts. When that became impossible, Egypt decided not to block the report, but our experts registered Egypt's position officially on 26 August 1993.

It is for this reason that Egypt, among other sponsors, at the last session of the General Assembly decided to introduce a draft resolution under agenda item 71 (c), "Transparency in armaments". The objective was not to undermine the traditional draft resolution presented by the Netherlands, which we hold in great esteem, but was aimed at complementing such efforts by presenting a draft text that deals with those aspects of the transparency issue that have not been adequately dealt with, nor reflected in the later three panels of experts.

In our draft resolution this year we are urging Member States to submit their views to the Secretary-General for the elaboration of practical means for the further development of registers in order to increase transparency related to weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, to the transfer of equipment and technology directly related to the development and manufacture of such weapons, and to high technology with military applications, for consideration by the governmental group of experts to be convened in the year 2000.

The support received for the Egyptian draft last year, and in particular the 98 votes in favour, is indeed tangible testimony to the fact that Egypt is not the only country concerned about the selective way in which the transparency issue has been handled so far, and hence we hope that this year the draft will enjoy even larger and more overwhelming support.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): I should like briefly to draw the attention of the members of the Committee to the draft resolution on Mongolia's international security and nuclear-weapon-free status, document A/C.1/53/L.10/Rev.1, introduced by my delegation yesterday. Since the introduction of the draft resolution several delegations have expressed their interest in co-sponsoring it. In this connection, I would like to inform the Committee that interested delegations are more than welcome to do so by signing the register of sponsorship with the Secretariat.

Mr. Valle (Brazil) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The delegation of Brazil, speaking on behalf of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) — Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay — and the associated countries of Bolivia and Chile, wishes to avail itself of this opportunity to emphasize how important we think it is to adopt appropriate measures to regulate the international maritime transport of radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel in accordance with the highest international standards of safety. Our interest stems from our constant and well-justified concern about the obvious risks that such transport poses to the health of inhabitants and the marine environment of the coastal States in the regions through which the transit occurs.

We wish to reiterate the concepts contained in the joint declaration that the Foreign Ministries of Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay issued on 17 January 1997, which was circulated as an official document of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We wish to recall that the norms of international law and national legislation give coastal States jurisdiction over the protection and preservation of the marine environment in their respective exclusive economic zones with a view to preventing, reducing and controlling the contamination of those areas.

We also wish to reiterate that in the competent international organizations it is necessary to step up regulation of the transport of radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel, through, *inter alia*, guarantees on non-contamination of the marine environment, exchange of information on routes chosen, mandatory provision of information to coastal States on contingency plans in case of accidents in international maritime transport, the commitment to recover radioactive waste in case of accidents involving ships transporting such waste, and the payment of compensation in cases of injury and damage.

We welcome the adoption in 1997 of the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management. However, we do not believe that the Convention pays sufficient attention to transboundary transportation, and we continue to support the efforts that are being made in the IAEA to adopt and improve upon international instruments and regulations on the safety of transport of radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel. We completely support resolution 13 on this subject, adopted on 25 September 1998 at the forty-second regular session of the General Conference of the IAEA. We wish to emphasize the importance we attach to operative paragraphs 2, 4 and 6, which explicitly refer to regulating the safe transport of radioactive material and call upon States dispatching radioactive material to supply to potentially affected States that so request appropriate guarantees that their regulations that take into account the Agency's regulation of transportation and information relevant to the transport of radioactive material. In addition, with a view to safeguarding the safety and health of our populations and environment, we believe that efforts should be continued to encourage the adoption of machinery that will provide sufficient guarantees to all States concerned regarding the use of the strictest possible safety measures for the international maritime transport of radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel, as well as regarding reparations for damage caused by any accidents in this connection.

We wish to emphasize the article dealing with notification and prior consent of the transit State, as stipulated in the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Wastes and their Disposal and in the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Code for the Safe Carriage of Irradiated Nuclear Fuel. I wish to recall that the Final Declaration of the fifth meeting of representatives of States members of the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic, held in Buenos Aires from 21 to 22 October 1998, called upon member States to continue their efforts to achieve appropriate measures to govern the maritime transport of radioactive and toxic waste, taking into account the interests of coastal States, and especially in accordance with the standards of the IMO and the IAEA. We believe that the progress that we can make in this connection will redound to the benefit both of coastal States and of those States involved in the international maritime transport of radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel, as this will make it possible to coordinate and adopt the necessary safeguards in case of accidents. We believe that any progress relating to the prevention of such accidents will be duly appreciated by the international community.

Mr. Mesdoua (Algeria) (*interpretation from French*): It is a great pleasure for me once again to introduce in the First Committee the draft resolution under the agenda item entitled "Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region", contained in document A/C.1/53/L.32/Rev.2, on behalf of the following sponsors: Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Jordan, Luxembourg, Malta, Mauritania, Monaco, Morocco, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia, Turkey and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The regular submission by the group of sponsors of a draft resolution on this subject reflects the support and the shared will of the States of the Mediterranean basin and of Europe to turn our region into a zone of peace, security and cooperation, thereby making the Mediterranean Sea a genuine sea of peace. In recent years, Mediterranean and European States have embarked on a process of a dialogue of partnership by intensifying their joint efforts to promote and consolidate peace and security in the region and to lay the basis for multifaceted cooperation and partnership, the ultimate objective of which is the prosperity and stability of the countries of the Mediterranean as a whole.

It should be recalled that after the Euro-Mediterranean Conference held in Barcelona in 1995, which laid the foundation for the new relations between the two shores of the Mediterranean, the second Euro-Mediterranean Conference, held in Valetta in April 1997, provided a propitious opportunity for an assessment of the process and for giving the necessary political momentum to that partnership.

In the context of the efforts undertaken through consultation and dialogue between the two shores of the Mediterranean, the ministerial meeting of the

Mediterranean forum, held in Algiers in July 1997, provided a complementary framework for strengthening consultation and dialogue even further.

The draft resolution that the co-sponsors are submitting to the Committee, like the draft resolution submitted last year, tries to be concise and to avoid repetition in its focus on the essential aspects of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean. In substance and form it does not differ at all from resolutions adopted at previous sessions, and in particular from the last resolution adopted by the General Assembly on this item, resolution 52/43 of December 1997.

The preambular part of the draft resolution recalls the initiative undertaken by the countries of the region to consolidate peace, security and cooperation, and stresses the responsibility of all States to contribute to stability and prosperity in the Mediterranean region and their commitment to respect the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The preambular part also recognizes the indivisibility of all aspects of security in the region.

In operative paragraphs 1 and 2 the draft resolution reiterates certain fundamental principles, and in operative paragraph 4 stresses the need to eliminate economic and social disparities among the States of the Mediterranean basin and to promote mutual respect and greater understanding among cultures in order to strengthen peace, security and cooperation among the countries of the region.

As regards disarmament, the draft resolution calls upon all States of the region that have not yet done so to adhere to all the multilaterally negotiated legal instruments on disarmament and non-proliferation. Similarly, States are encouraged to promote openness and transparency.

Lastly, all the States of the region are invited to cooperate in all fields in order to address terrorism, international crime and the illicit production and trafficking of drugs and weapons, which jeopardize friendly relations among States, hinder development and international cooperation and destroy human rights, fundamental freedoms and the democratic bases of a pluralistic society.

The sponsors I have enumerated are confident that the draft resolution on this subject, contained in document A/C.1/53/L.32/Rev.2, which fits more within the framework of international security than that of disarmament, will continue to have the support of all members of the Committee and will be adopted without a vote.

Mr. Seibert (Germany): I have the honour to introduce, on behalf of the sponsors, the draft resolution entitled "Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures". The draft resolution is sponsored by 64 Member States the names of which are listed in document A/C.1/53/L.31/Rev.1. We attach particular importance to the fact that the sponsorship bridges the usual regional group lines and involves Member States from virtually all regions of the globe. I should like to express special thanks to all of them.

The draft resolution "Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures" was first introduced by our delegation in 1996, resulting in the adoption of resolution 51/45 N. Sponsored by 42 countries, it was adopted by the General Assembly without a vote and later included in the ongoing deliberations of the Disarmament Commission.

As reiterated in the second preambular paragraph of this year's draft resolution, its basic idea is to focus the First Committee's attention in a more integrated manner on the relevance of certain practical disarmament measures for the consolidation of peace in post-conflict environments. As experience has shown, such measures as arms control, particularly with regard to small arms and light weapons, confidence-building, demobilization, reintegration of former combatants, demining and conversion are often prerequisites for maintaining and consolidating peace and security and thus for providing a basis for effective rehabilitation and socio-economic development in areas that have suffered from conflict. That scope of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N remains unchanged in the new draft.

As with last year's resolution 52/38 G, sponsored by no fewer than 63 delegations, the present draft resolution explicitly refers to new developments that have taken place since the first resolution. First, it notes with satisfaction, in the third preambular paragraph, that the importance of practical disarmament measures has received growing recognition from the international community in many respects.

Secondly, the Disarmament Commission agreed in 1997 on a conventional item which explicitly referred to General Assembly resolution 51/45 N and thus included it directly in its deliberations on future guidelines on this item. These deliberations, according to the usual practice,

will continue for a total of three sessions of the Disarmament Commission. As a consequence, reference to Disarmament Commission proceedings was again given a prominent place in the draft resolution. Members will find this in the fifth preambular paragraph and in operative paragraph 1. In the Disarmament Commission discussions on this item during the past two years we have had, in our view, a lively and fruitful exchange of views which serves as a useful basis for further deliberations and will hopefully lead to the adoption of such guidelines in 1999.

Last year's resolution took note of the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Consolidation of Peace through Practical Disarmament Measures", submitted pursuant to resolution 51/45 N. We make reference once again to that report in operative paragraph 2 of this year's draft resolution and encourage Member States, as well as regional arrangements and agencies, to lend their support to the implementation of recommendations contained therein.

In paragraph 12 of his report the Secretary-General expressed his view that the readiness of the international community to assist affected States in their efforts to consolidate peace would greatly benefit the effective implementation of practical disarmament measures. He also stated that he would wish to see the establishment of a group of interested States in order to facilitate this process and to build upon the momentum generated. As members all know, this group of interested States was formed in New York in March 1998, under our chairmanship, in an effort to strengthen international cooperation in this field and to promote concrete projects of practical disarmament, especially those undertaken by affected States themselves.

The efforts made by this group have had a considerable impact. Since March three concrete projects have emerged: first, a train-the-trainers seminar for military experts from Central African States was held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, in July this year; secondly, in two weeks there will be a workshop in Guatemala to elaborate a policy study based on lessons learned from the collection of arms, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants in Central America; and a third project, introduced by Albania, calls for assistance in creating incentives for a programme to get large numbers of the civilian population in Albania to turn in their weapons. Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala conducted a fact-finding mission to the country last May. A first pilot project will be presented as soon as the current evaluation process is concluded. This year's draft resolution keeps up this momentum and wants to build upon the progress achieved so far. We want to encourage the group's work, and therefore operative paragraph 3 the draft resolution invites the group of interested States to continue its work.

In this context, I draw attention to the fact that practical disarmament measures have particular relevance with respect to the growing problems arising from the excessive and destabilizing accumulation and proliferation of small arms and light weapons. They pose a serious threat to national and regional peace and security and reduce the prospects for economic development in many affected regions, particularly in post-conflict situations. It in this field in particular that the Secretary-General is requested by affected Member States to assist in collecting and destroying small arms and light weapons that are not under control and are not needed for the legitimate security purposes of the concerned States. That is why in operative paragraph 4 we encourage the Member States, including the group of interested States, to lend their support to the Secretary-General in responding to such requests. In doing so, we also implement one important recommendation contained in the Secretary-General's report of 27 August 1997 on small arms, document A/52/298, which was adopted by the General Assembly at its 1997 session. It reads:

> "The United Nations should support, with the assistance of the donor community, all appropriate post-conflict initiatives related to disarmament and demobilization, such as the disposal and destruction of weapons, including weapons turn-in programmes sponsored locally by governmental and non-governmental organizations". (*A/52/298, para. 79 (b)*)

With these basic explanatory remarks I put this draft resolution before the Committee. Extensive consultations with sponsors and with other delegations were conducted prior to the submission of the draft resolution in an effort again to secure consensus on it. In keeping with this tradition, I trust that the draft resolution will again be adopted without a vote. We invite all delegations to join in the consensus on this draft resolution.

Mr. Vinhas (Portugal): The concept of practical disarmament, which was first introduced by former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his Agenda for Peace, has been given increased attention by both Member States and the international community as well as by the Secretary-General in his reform programme. This reflects the fact that in most conflict and post-conflict environments questions of the control of small arms and light weapons, demining, demobilization and the reintegration of former

combatants are increasingly considered to be crucial for effective conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation. The post-conflict disarmament component has to be addressed realistically when we engage in conflict resolution so that we may have a durable peace. We mention this in order to permit a proper assessment of the merits of the draft resolution entitled "Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures", which effectively links the concept of some disarmament aspects with the concept of conflict resolution.

In pursuance of General Assembly resolution 52/38 G, a group of interested States was established this year under the leadership of Germany to facilitate the process of assisting affected countries in their efforts to consolidate peace. Within the framework of that group we have been dealing with concrete efforts in practical disarmament by jointly sponsoring concrete projects upon request by affected countries. In doing so, the group is taking a major step from the merely conceptual to having a real impact. The group has already sponsored two projects, and my Government was particularly pleased to have made a financial contribution to the first project supported by the group, the train-the-trainers workshop which took place in Yaoundé in July. We would like to encourage the group of interested States to continue its very valuable work, wishing that we could move from the discussion of practical disarmament — seminars, workshops, and so on — to more concrete and practical projects.

Portugal once again fully supports the draft resolution entitled "Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures", just introduced by the Ambassador of Germany, and we particularly welcome the reference to small arms and light weapons in operative paragraph 4, widening the conceptual scope of the mandate of the group of interested States in order to include more ambitious objectives.

Mr. Hoey (Ireland): I have asked for the floor to speak in support of the draft resolution which the Ambassador of Germany has just introduced. My delegation attaches particular importance to this draft resolution because it focuses on one of the most important aspects of the problems posed by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, namely, the need for a comprehensive and integrated approach towards certain practical disarmament measures.

I want to take this opportunity to express my delegation's gratitude to Germany for the initiative it has taken in once again presenting us with a valuable draft resolution and for its untiring efforts in ensuring that the draft resolution can, like previous ones on this subject, be adopted by consensus. In my delegation's view, this is a clear signal from the General Assembly of the importance we all attach to this subject.

My delegation also wishes to renew its thanks to Germany for bringing together the group of interested States here in New York to discuss the implications of, and lessons learned from, disarmament and peace-building initiatives in the areas of conflict. Ireland was particularly pleased to be able to make a financial contribution to a subregional seminar on the training of trainers for practical disarmament measures held in Yaoundé earlier this year. The value of meetings of this group is that they allow Member States in which practical disarmament measures or peace-building projects are being planned to take the lead in the design and implementation of these initiatives. We firmly believe that this is the only way that the success and effectiveness of such projects can be guaranteed.

There are an increasing number of regional and subregional initiatives being undertaken in relation to small arms and light weapons, both licit and illicit. We warmly welcome these and commend those Member States which are actively participating in them. They make an important contribution to the way in which we address the uncontrolled accumulation of these weapons and help us measure more accurately the impact which they have on countries that are trying to rebuild their societies, infrastructures and economies in the aftermath of conflict.

However, we also believe that the United Nations has an equally important role to play in addressing certain aspects of what is an extremely complex question. That is why we value the work that the United Nations Disarmament Commission is currently engaged in, and we look forward to the successful adoption next year of a set of practical guidelines under the agenda item on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace. Annex IV of the report of the Disarmament Commission, which is being presented to this Committee, contains the paper presented by the Chairman of the Working Group, the Ambassador of Uganda, Mr. Semakula Kiwanuka. As Chairman of the Group, he constantly reminded us of the enormous importance of the task we had set ourselves and encouraged us to keep our focus clear on what the objectives were. He has left us with a useful report containing all the essential elements, a report on which, with the characteristic goodwill and cooperation that characterize so much of the work of the Disarmament Commission, it should certainly

be possible next year to reach consensus. My delegation will work actively to that end.

Mr. Reimaa (Finland): I wish to address the question of small arms. Finland is a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.13, prepared under the leadership of Japan, and of draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.41, prepared under the leadership of South Africa. Allow me also in this context reaffirm our full support for draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.31, entitled "Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures", which was introduced a few minutes ago by my German colleague.

The adoption of these draft resolutions will demonstrate the readiness and determination of the Member States of the United Nations to address the acute problem of small arms in a comprehensive and effective manner. My Minister, in her statement to the General Assembly on 22 September, underlined the importance Finland attaches to finding sustainable solutions to the small arms problem.

The issue of small arms touches the lives of too many people around the world. These weapons are the kind actually being used in conflicts. They are used in crime. Civilians, often women and children, are the victims in nine cases out of 10. Dealing with the issue requires practical disarmament, law enforcement and a recognition of the link between security and development.

The draft resolutions firmly recognize the broader context. It is within that context that they have a particular focus on one aspect of the problem: the illicit arms trade. These draft resolutions complement each other. The decision in operative paragraph 1 of draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.13 to hold an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects is an important new step forward. This decision should be followed through with thorough preparation, mindful of the need to avoid duplication of the work of other bodies of the United Nations, in particular, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

The basic guidelines for holding such a conference have already been provided in the Secretary-General's report in document A/52/298, containing the recommendations that were made last year by the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms. We look to the recently established new Group of Governmental Experts to build upon the results already achieved and to provide substantive recommendations concerning the objective, scope and agenda for such a conference, among its other recommendations.

The input by the Group of Governmental Experts, together with additional views of Member States, should make it possible for the next session of the General Assembly to launch the formal preparatory process of the conference. Finland thanks Switzerland for its generous offer and supports the holding of the conference in Geneva.

The issue of the illicit arms trade, as part of the bigger problem of small arms and light weapons, requires a multifaceted approach. The work done by the Group of Governmental Experts has already illustrated the complexity of the questions the international community is facing in this context. The efforts made in the various international forums should complement one another. For example, the key principles and rules of behaviour relevant to addressing the small arms issue could be dealt with and developed on a global basis. More concrete measures should be undertaken at regional, national and even local levels.

Some measures, such as information exchange and legally binding cooperation, are best dealt with through regional or subregional cooperation, including through organizations such as the Organization of American States (OAS), the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Some measures by their very nature would need to be tailored to each particular situation — for instance, to prevent the spread of weapons or an outbreak of violence, or as part of post-conflict peace-building efforts.

In our view, international cooperation should be aimed, above all, at finding practical solutions for the real world; at preventing the excessive and destabilizing accumulation and proliferation of small arms; and at solving problems caused by the use of these weapons in mostly internal conflicts.

The small arms problem is not just about creating new international norms but, more importantly, about full compliance with relevant international norms, including the laws of war and respect for human rights, including respect for minority rights. The accumulation, proliferation and use of small arms in geographical areas of past or present conflict have a direct bearing on development, and therefore on development assistance by donor nations as well. We hope that the work that is being undertaken within the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) will for its part take into account, more fully than heretofore,

the relationship between development, security and small arms. An integrated approach is needed to place the small arms problem into the wider context of sustainable development and conflict prevention. The donor community's efforts are a crucial complement to local, national and regional efforts to effectively address the problem of small arms.

Given the horizontal nature of the issue, proper coordination of various international activities is essential. We welcome the establishment of the Coordinating Action on Small Arms (CASA) within the Secretariat. A strong role for the United Nations on the small arms issue is in the interests of all of us.

Mr. Soutar (United Kingdom): On 16 October I had the honour, as President of the Conference on Disarmament, to present to this Committee the report of the Conference on its 1998 session. It is now my duty to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.12, on the report of the Conference.

This is the traditional vehicle by which the General Assembly takes note of the work of the Conference. For that reason the draft resolution follows a well-tried formula. Members of the Committee will no doubt have noted that the preambular paragraphs are identical to those of last year's resolution on this subject. Of the operative paragraphs, paragraphs 1, 2, 8, 9 and 10 are identical to the corresponding paragraphs in last year's resolution.

Operative paragraph 3 welcomes the setting up of two ad hoc committees during the 1998 session, while operative paragraph 4 welcomes the institution of presidential consultations on agenda item 1 during the 1998 session. Operative paragraph 5 refers to the inter-sessional work requested in paragraph 48 of the report of the Conference on Disarmament.

Delegations have pointed out to me that the draft resolution has departed from the exact wording used in that report and also used in the corresponding resolution last year. I shall be happy to arrange for an appropriate correction to be made.

Operative paragraphs 6 and 7 refer to the Conference's review of its membership and of its agenda and working methods, respectively.

As I pointed out in my statement on 16 October, the report of the Conference on Disarmament reflects the fact that after a period of reflection in 1998 the Conference re-embarked on substantive negotiations on two important issues. The draft resolution now before the Committee acknowledges that fact and looks forward to a resumption of productive work in 1999.

In conclusion, I should like to express the hope that, like draft resolutions of previous years, this draft resolution can be adopted without a vote.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.